

United States Postal Service

§ 961.10

§ 961.7 Answer to petition.

Within 15 days from the date of receiving the petition, the Postal Service's representative shall file an answer to the petition, and attach all available relevant records and documents in support of the Postal Service's debt claim, and/or the administrative salary offset schedule proposed by the Postal Service for collecting any such claim. The answer shall provide a clear and thorough description of the basis for the Postal Service's determination of the alleged debt, its calculation of the amount of the alleged debt, and/or its proposed offset schedule.

§ 961.8 Hearing Official authority and responsibilities.

The Hearing Official's authority includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- (a) Ruling on all motions or requests by the parties.
- (b) Issuing notices, orders or memoranda to the parties concerning the hearing proceedings.
- (c) Conducting telephone conferences with the parties to expedite the proceedings. The Hearing Official will prepare a Memorandum of Telephone Conference, which shall be transmitted to both parties and which serves as the official record of that conference.
- (d) After considering the positions of the parties, determining whether an oral hearing (or alternatively, a hearing solely on written submissions) shall be conducted, and setting the place, date, and time for such a hearing.
- (e) Administering oaths or affirmations to witnesses.
- (f) Conducting the hearing in a manner to maintain discipline and decorum while assuring that relevant, reliable and probative evidence is elicited on the issues in dispute, but irrelevant, immaterial or repetitious evidence is excluded. The Hearing Official in his or her discretion may examine witnesses to ensure that a satisfactory record is developed.
- (g) Establishing the record in the case. The weight to be attached to any evidence of record will rest within the discretion of the Hearing Official. Except as the Hearing Official may otherwise order, no proof shall be received in

evidence after completion of an oral hearing or, in cases submitted on the written record, after notification by the Hearing Official that the record is closed. The Hearing Official may require either party, with appropriate notice to the other party, to submit additional evidence on any relevant matter.

(h) Granting reasonable time extensions or other relief for good cause shown in the Hearing Official's sole discretion.

(i) Issuing the final decision. The decision must include the determination of the amount and validity of the alleged debt and, where applicable, the repayment schedule. The Hearing Official will issue the decision as soon as practicable after the close of the record. Collection activity remains stayed until the decision has issued.

§ 961.9 Opportunity for oral hearing.

An oral hearing shall be conducted in the sole discretion of the Hearing Official. An oral hearing may be conducted in-person, by telephone, by video conference, or other appropriate means as directed by the Hearing Official. When the Hearing Official determines that an oral hearing shall not be conducted, the decision shall be based solely on the written submissions. The Hearing Official shall arrange for the recording and transcription of an oral hearing, which shall serve as the official record of the hearing. In the event of an unexcused absence, the hearing may proceed without the participation of the absent party.

§ 961.10 Effect of Hearing Official's decision; motion for reconsideration.

(a) After the receipt of written submissions or after the conclusion of the hearing and the receipt of post-hearing briefs, if any, the Hearing Official shall issue a written decision, which shall include the findings of fact and conclusions of law, relied upon.

(b) The Hearing Official shall send each party a copy of the decision. The Hearing Official's decision shall be the final administrative determination on the employee's debt or repayment schedule. No reconsideration of the decision will be allowed unless a motion for reconsideration is filed within 10